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"Don't it spoil the effect?" I asked, to dissect it like that?"

"No, you little chump, it makes it all the prettier. To think that I—even I—can take a few colors and a brush and produce something like it in a short while—that is a little like it." Chloe was always so modest.

"Exactly like it," I said, emphatically. I've seen you do it a thousand times. I would rather walk on your roads myself. They are more natural."

Chloe turned her face so that I could see straight into those wonderful dark-rimmed eyes. "Charlie," she said, "I wish everybody believed as you do," and there was so plaintive a tone in her sweet voice that I would have thrown my arms about her then and there but they were already full of paint-box and easel. I had to content myself with blowing an awkward kiss at the back of her head, for she had turned again, and those dear eyes were looking once more straight ahead at the grays and browns and purples of the winding road.

At last we came to the field of brown-eyed Susans. It was time; my poor arms ached. Chloe stopped and looked about her.

"Here Charlie," she said, "is a vacant spot and a fine view. Look at that mass of flowers banked against the yellowish-green of the 'way-off thicket. How well that will look in my picture, with the blue sky beyond! Isn't the sky a beautiful blue to-day?"

"Beautiful," I assented, "but this old easel won't stand up. There! At last! And now for the umbrella. Thank goodness, it hoisted without the usual hitch. Now, you're ready. Fire away!"

But instead of "firing away," Chloe still stood and looked at the skies.

"I used to have a friend," she said, "who, whenever she saw a particularly blue sky, said, 'How pretty that is! How I wish I had a dress off of it! Wasn't that a funny idea? As if the heavens were a bargain counter.'"

"Awfully," said I, though I didn't exactly see where the fun came in; "but if you don't hurry up you won't have the right slant of sunshine on your brown-eyed Susans, and we'll have to come again."

"Well," she said, "I am going to begin now," but she took her seat with a half sigh. The usual mood for work seemed to have deserted her.

Nevertheless, the fair skies soon took shape under her facile fingers, and beneath them a blotch of green appeared which was soon to develop into the distant thicket as we saw it, the greens almost yellow in the warmth of the sunlight. In the foreground there glowed the field of brown-eyed Susans.

I had always watched the work of my nimble-fingered Chloe with delight, but she surpassed herself on this particular afternoon. She seemed to have dipped her brush into the sunshine, or a ray or two had mixed itself with the colors of her palette—the little picture shone so warmly, sunny. Her listlessness had dropped from her like a mantle.

"Oh, Chloe," I cried, as with a sweep of her brush she flecked the high lights into the clouds. "It's lovely, lovely."

"I'm glad you like it, Charlie," she said, dimpling with smiles, (she was so simply sweet, pleased with the admiration of a mere boy, who knew absolutely nothing of art, but who still could feel the magic touch of her genius, and who she well knew would have been

content to bask forever in the sunlight of her smile, asking nothing better of Dame Fortune); "I'm glad you like it."

At that moment there was a whir of wheels, and a basket phaeton rolled into sight along the purple road.

Chloe laid down her brush—the phaeton spoiled her landscape for a moment—and waited for it to pass.

She glanced idly at the occupants. They were a negro driver and a negro nurse beside him. In the nurse's arms was a little girl who, against that dusky background, stood out in high relief a clear-cut cameo. She had hair the color of gold, such hair as one seldom sees except on the heads of very young children, heavenly flax not yet dyed in the colors of earth.

Chloe sat looking at the pretty child, idly, then fixedly, and when the phaeton passed us, she started up and clasped her hands together. Her palette and brushes fell to the ground. Not noticing, she peered into the face of the yellow-haired child, and when the phaeton had passed, she turned about and followed it with her eyes as far as she could see. The child leaned out and looked back at Chloe, her hair a mop of yellow, sharply defined at first, and gradually disappearing in a blur of brown-eyed Susans.

I looked at Chloe. She was white with suppressed passion, and the dark circles about her eyes seemed to have grown darker in contrast with her white face.

"It is his child," she cried, "his child!" and then I knew, and my boy's heart beat thick and fast with jealousy beneath my boy's jacket. I remember the story now, how Maurice Steadman had loved Chloe well and pressed his suit with all a lover's pleadings, but Chloe had refused him, wedding herself to art instead. "No husband should wear her from her beloved art," she had said, with her pretty head high in the air. Then he had given up and, moving away from the town, had married. This summer he was back on a visit, and this was his little girl. It was the first time Chloe had seen her.

But what a change had come over my darling Chloe? Her eyes were fierce, her lip trembled. Suddenly she turned and took a great brush from the brush-pot near by, and, before I could prevent her, she swept this brush rapidly to and fro across the wet canvass.

Alas for my beautiful field of brown-eyed Susans! The fine blue skies were hopelessly blurred, the thicket was a mass of muddy green, and in the foreground only one or two flowers hung their disconsolate heads. I could have wept. The ruin was complete, and I had taken such delight in that little picture.

"O, Chloe," I cried, "how could you, how could you?"

She threw her brush passionately to the ground, where it lay thick with dust and muddy color, and covered her face with her hands. The tears fell through her fingers.

"O, Charlie," she cried, "I have made a mistake, I have ruined my life," and though I put my strong, young arms about her and tried my boyish best to soothe her, she only wept the harder, and moaned again and again, "I have ruined my life, I've ruined my life."

Presently she took her wet hands from her face and looked up. The blue skies had changed. Dark clouds rolled

up in the south and the wind began to blow. It threatened rain.

"The sunlight is all gone," she said; it went into that little child's hair." Then wearily: "Come, Charley, let's go home; I'm tired out."

And home we went, haltingly under the leaden skies. I think Chloe limped as she walked. She seemed suddenly so tired. As I looked into her haggard face I hated Maurice Steadman with all my heart, and yet it was not his fault, for had not Chloe of her own accord chosen art?

At the studio I stole the poor little ruined canvass, and, slipping it under my jacket, carried it home. There I hid it in the darkest of closets, where Chloe might never see it and be reminded of her mistake in life.

And there only the other day I found it, and though I have since grown to bearded manhood, I knelt, and looked at it through blinding tears, for Chloe is dead.

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